

fty-six signers of the declaration, seven were not members of Congress when it passed.

On July 5th Congress adopted a resolution ordering that the Declaration be sent to the several assemblies, conventions, and councils of safety, and to all the officers of the continental armies. In this way it was soon proclaimed throughout the United States. It met with the most enthusiastic ratification and adoption. From New Hampshire to Georgia there were bonfires, torchlight processions, the firing of guns, and ringing of bells. "The people," said Samuel Adams, "seemed to recognize this resolution as though it was a decree promulgated from heaven."

The Declaration of Independence has been severely criticised both for its style and for the principles it enunciates, but its place among the great papers of history is secure, and criticism of it is becoming idle and uninteresting. That it contained nothing new was perhaps the feature that won for it the affection of the world. Jefferson claimed nothing new for it. When charged with rehashing old sentiments and copying from Locke and others when he wrote it, he denied the charge of plagiarism, but acknowledged that there were no new ideas or new sentiments in it. Nevertheless, the declaration is no servile imitation. It was written from the shoulder. "I turned to neither book nor pamphlet while writing it," says Jefferson. How peculiarly it was an embodiment of his own ideas is seen in a sentence in

letter to his friend Fleming, written three days before the Declaration was passed. "If any doubts have (sic) arisen as to me, my country will have my *political creed* in the form of the declaration which I was lately directed to draw." Jefferson was brimful of ideas of reform when he wrote the Declaration, and he aimed to make it a profession of his political faith. His faith was that of a democrat, and the Declaration of Independence is a formal expression of the beliefs and aspirations of the democracy of his time. It is a remarkable paper, because it so accessfully proclaims the spirit of the age in which it was written.